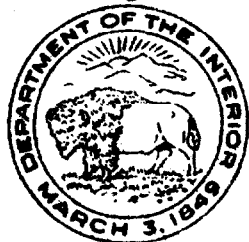


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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MAINE FOLKS CHANGE COOKING AND HEATING ROUTINE---  
WOODCOCK HAS HABITAT TROUBLE

Because the residents of some parts of Maine changed their cooking and heating routine the woodcock, one of the fine gamebirds in Eastern United States, is being squeezed out of one part of its normal habitat, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wild creatures prefer dwelling places which meet certain general specifications and the woodcock is no exception. It prefers young open growths of mixed varieties of timber of young hardwood stands, especially if there are many small open fields and pastures.

For years the Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge in Maine has had several thousand acres of good woodcock habitat. The normal harvest of firewood on the refuge, with the accompanying clearing of the roads and the tearing out of an occasional patch of brush, kept that part of the refuge ideal for the woodcock.

Then came changes in the homes of the farmers and the villagers. Oil stoves and furnaces replaced wood for cooking and heating in many instances. No longer did the wood cutters automatically keep that unit of the refuge in the partly open condition which the woodcock prefers. Once this wood harvest was curtailed, Mother Nature went to work and soon young trees and underbrush filled the open courting areas until the woodcock disappeared from several thousand acres of formerly favorite habitat.

To bring back the small park-like areas and with them the woodcock, the Fish and Wildlife Service is planning a systematic cutting program which should reestablish conditions necessary for the woodcock to thrive. The wood thus harvested is used for pulp, fish weirs, some fireplace logs as well as for Christmas trees.

The story of the woodcock and its lost habitat on Moosehorn Refuge is unique only in providing one instance in which the wildlife specialists may pinpoint the apparent time and causes for the change in habitat.

As our economic life changes, so shifts our impact upon the woods and the fields, and so shifts the habitat of wildlife and the wildlife itself. Left undisturbed, Nature will often go through a cycle of changing vegetation with each change favoring another type of wildlife. The open field with its grain and weed seeds may be ideal for the pheasant and the Hungarian partridge provided a convenient fence row or some other type of cover is nearby. But when the field becomes a brushy area, the pheasant and the Hungarian partridge vanish while quail, rabbits and other small animals appear. As the brush gradually yields to timber, quail and rabbits give way to the grouse and later to deer and other game. As the woods become heavier, turkeys move in—or can be planted—to utilize acorns and other such mast that is plentiful. The trees grow taller and the shade gets denser while the underbrush disappears along with most animals except for their occasional journeys through what is now a forest. Finally, along comes a fire or a timber harvest, the long-shaded ground is again drenched in sunlight to stimulate regrowth of plants and the progressive cycle of plants and animals begins again.

Modifying that cycle to fit the type of game wanted in a given area is one of the jobs of "management." Just as ducks require marshes so do other animals require certain conditions; when these conditions change, that species of game disappears. Hence, if any specific type of game is wanted in any specific area the habitat must be managed to suit the animals' needs.

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